

CRT News

CRT Public Meeting



Wednesday,
April 16, 2014

12:00- 1:00 pm
at

237 Main Street, Buffalo, NY

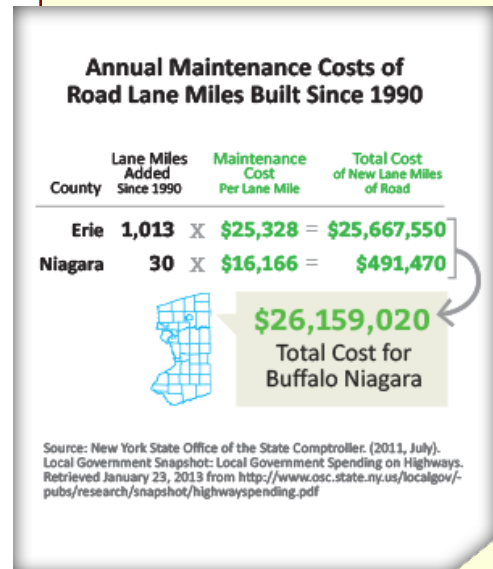
“One Region Forward—Toward a sustainable Buffalo Niagara”

a report by
Kelly Dixon, GBNRTC

Hear how a new regional vision is shaping up at One Region Forward, which incorporates what citizens want our region to look like in forty years. For more info, see oneregionforward.org

Twenty years of using taxpayer money to maintain new lane miles since 1990 equals \$520 million, spent to serve urban sprawl.

Could an expanded light rail system reduce the demand for new road lane miles? and be a sustainable investment?



Source: oneregionforward.org/what-the-data-tells-us

Quotable quotes...

“We have six decades now of building sprawl in our new areas in this country, and these development patterns are not sustainable financially or environmentally.” —Jim Brainard, Republican mayor of Carmel, Indiana

...National Public Radio broadcast, 1-23-14

Metro Rail: a Transit Rider’s View

by Douglas Funke, CRT President

Metro Rail Delays signal: Improvements, please!

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A Day on Transit

In a recent article the Buffalo News criticized light rail delays that are resulting from cars-on-Main-Street construction. As a transit user, I well understand the difficulties created when trains run only every twenty minutes. And I know how these problems are exacerbated when connecting to the light rail from other routes. Miss a connection and add more than twenty minutes to your trip!

It was the day of the most recent blizzard. I had meetings downtown and I was looking forward to getting some work done on the warm Niagara Falls Boulevard (#34) bus. Unfortunately, it seemed that everyone else was looking forward to reaching their destination alone in cars. Traffic was moving slow making the bus about twenty minutes late.

And as the Buffalo News article points out, the timing of the construction is very unfortunate – service gets reduced just when the Buffalo Medical Campus is growing and strongly encouraging their workers to use the train to get to work. It is difficult to convince new workers that the train is the best way to get to work when the service is infrequent and connections so difficult. The CRT hopes medical campus workers will look past the current difficulties and make the light rail their preferred method of commute. We also call on the NFTA to implement any and all mitigations possible, such as offering significantly more frequent Main Street (#8) bus service as suggested by NFTA Executive Director, Kim Minkel.

In spite of being very cold, I decided to do some research. I started counting the passing cars to see how many were single occupancy vehicles (SOVs). It was too cold to write down the data so I just counted groups of ten cars and made a mental note how many in each group, if any, had more than one occupant. There was plenty of data available, albeit moving slowly. Based on my counts, I estimated that well over 95% of cars and light trucks were SOVs. If more travelers had taken the bus, or even car-pooled, the bus wouldn’t have been so late and we all would have had a less stressful commute.

But there is another issue that needs to be recognized. The existing light rail should have been built with more crossovers in the first place. This was a cost-cutting decision that was made when the system was first built in the 1980s. With fewer crossovers the NFTA is forced to single track every time significant maintenance is done – not just during the current cars-on-Main-Street project. We saw this during the recent overhead catenary replacement work in the tunnel. As more maintenance will be needed, more single tracking will be required.

The bus stops on Niagara Falls Boulevard do not have shelters so the wait was cold and unpleasant. However, once on the bus I warmed up and I found the ride relaxing and productive. I was able to catch up on my reading with not a worry about the weather outside or the driving.

We encourage the NFTA to install more crossovers when feasible. This should have been considered as part of the current cars-sharing-Main-Street project and is especially needed in the long tunnel run between Allen and University Stations. In addition, we encourage the NFTA to include adequate crossovers as part of any future light rail extensions.

I connected to the light rail at University Station to get downtown. The light rail does not share the right-of-way with traffic (at least not yet) so the trains were running according to schedule. I continued my reading and reached my destination in time for my meeting (since I had allowed extra time just in case and to account for the low frequency #34 bus schedule).

The City of Buffalo promises effective mitigations to avoid disruptions when cars return to Main Street and share the right-of-way with trains.

I hope such measures are successful.

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CRT at Transportation Equity Alliance conference, March 18-19, Albany, NY

Gladys Gifford, Doug Funke, and Lynn Magdol spent two days in Albany in March. Traveling by Amtrak, they arrived on Tuesday afternoon, March 18 at about 2 pm. Doug and Lynn visited the Western New York representatives to brief them on statewide and local transit-related issues, including three bills that were under consideration while we were there.

On Wednesday, they attended the Third Annual New York State Transportation Equity Conference, where they heard many informative speakers from around the state and networked with representatives of other citizen groups. Doug presented a summary of CRT activities as a participant on a panel of NYSTEA coalition members.



Join CRT!!

CRT relies on member dues for all ongoing expenses. Staffed by volunteers, all contributions go directly to promoting transit. Help us do more. Please consider donating at the levels listed below. Send your payment by [clicking here to use Paypal](#), or complete this form and mail it with your payment to CRTC, 617 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14203

Coalition member presentation panelists— Anita Halasz, Long Island Jobs with Justice; Pete King, Syracuse Urban Jobs Task Force; Blair Goodman, Community Voices Heard (Poughkeepsie); Doug Funke, CRT. Not pictured: Louis Bailey, Transit Riders Action Committee (NYC).

CRT membership year- January 1 to December 31.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 Email _____ Phone _____

All contributions are fully deductible

- Corporate - name/logo will be shown on our website \$250. - \$1000.
- Group/organization \$50.
- Household \$35.
- Individual \$25.
- Student, senior, unemployed, etc. \$5.

The return trip on Amtrak was very comfortable and relaxing— and they came home refreshed and energized, ready to continue CRT transportation activities.



Photo at Albany station, Amtrak: Lynn Magdol, Doug Funke, Gladys Gifford

2014-2015 NYS Budget passed:

A mixed bag for Transit

excerpts from report by Nadine Lemmon, tstc.org

\$30 Million Diverted from Downstate Transit

Despite an outpouring of support from legislators, multiple editorials from the media, and a solid need to improve transit service that was slashed in 2010, [NYC] transit riders lost to a determined and powerful governor. The biggest travesty is not the cumulative effect of last year’s \$20 million diversion, and this year’s \$30 million diversion, but the fact that there is an outstanding bill of \$350 million in MTA state service contract bonds, [which] the State had originally contracted to pay. *(to be paid by transit riders??)*

\$2.8 Million Increase in Operating Funds and a New Funding Formula for Upstate Transit

Upstate transit agencies, like Buffalo’s Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, ... got two important wins: a \$2.8 million increase in operating funds, as well as a new funding formula that should improve operating revenues in the years to come. As noted by the New York Public Transit Association, the funding formula for Upstate transit systems is outdated, largely the result of declining revenue from the gas tax, leaving insufficient dedicated funding for Upstate transit providers at a time when ridership is soaring. By pegging future receipts to the sales tax, which is inflation sensitive, this budget could lead to a steadier funding future for Upstate transit providers.

Still to come

Both the MTA and the New York State Department of Transportation have five-year capital programs that need to be designed, approved and signed. We’re looking forward to a year when transportation will be demanding more attention in the budget process.

Calendar

Apr. 16, 12-1 pm
 CRT Quarterly Public Meeting, 237
 Main St., Buffalo

May 1, 2 pm Forum “Lessons
 from Brooklyn Bridge Park: Creating
 a Vibrant Waterfront”
 977 Delaware Ave., Buffalo

May 2, 8 am- 3 pm Buffalo-Niagara
 Partnership, Transportation Summit,
 Hyatt, Buffalo

May 7, 9:30 am GBNRTC
 Planning & Coordinating Comm.,
 Carnegie Bldg, Niagara Falls

May 10 National Train Day
 see amtrak.com for info

May 17, 11 am Hands Across
 Buffalo on Ferry Street see
www.handsacrossbuffalo.org

June 4-7 CNU22 in Buffalo
 early registration discount ends
 April 30th!!

June 19 Dump the Pump Day